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Message Text

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53
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DRC-01 /054 W
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R 162137Z OCT 74
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2061
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EO 11652: N/A
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SUBJ: ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

SUMMARY. RAUL ENRIQUE CHANG WAS ELECTED FROM FIELD OF FOUR CANDIDATES AS PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CORREGIMIENTO REPRESENTATIVES (NACR) OCTOBER 10. THIS WEEK NACR HAS PASSED RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR REMOVAL OF MINISTERS AND OTHER EXECUTIVE BRANCH OFFICIALS WHO ARE NOT IN TUNE WITH REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS AND WHO HAVE SHOWN "DISRESPECT" FOR REPRESENTATIVES, AND FOR CREATION OF NACR BUDGET COMMITTET TO OVERSEE GOP BUDGETARY PROCESS.
NACR MEMBERS ARE CONTINUING THEIR EFFORTS TO EXERT GREATER LEVERAGE ON GOP EXECUTIVE BRANCH. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ELECTION FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NACR HELD OCTOBER 10 PRIOR TO FORMAL INAUGURATION OF THE MONTH-LONG ANNUAL NACR SESSION, RAUL ENRIQUE CHANG, REPRESENTATIVE OF OCU CORREGIMIENTO IN HERRERA PROVINCE, WON A PLURALITY OVER THREE OTHER CANDIDATES. CHANG'S TERM OF OFFICE WILL BE FOR ONE YEAR. THE JOB IS TAXING ONE BECAUSE, IN PAST PRACTICE AT LEAST, THE NACR PRESIDENT HAS HAD BROAD RANGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND COORDINATING TASKS. HE SERVES ON NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
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COMMISSION AND IS RECEPTOR AND COORDINATOR OF LEGISLATIVE

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PROPOSALS GENERATED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES THROUGHOUT THE
YEAR IN THEIR ROLES AS MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL COUNCILS OF
COORDINATION. THROUGHOUT THE YEAR THE 10 VICE PRESIDENTS TRANSMIT
REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS TO HIM FROM THE 505 REPRESENTATIVES.
HE ALSO HAS HEAVY SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS IN POLICY COUNCILS OF
GOP AND HAS CEREMONIAL DUTIES AT PROJECT INAUGURATIONS AND OTHER
EVENTS. CHANG'SPEECH AT OPENING OF NACR SESSION OCTOBER 11
WAS NOT IMPRESSIVE. WHETHER THIS WAS PRIMARILY DUE TO A LACK
OF TIME TO PREPARE SPEECH OR LACK OF ABILITY, WE DO NOT KNOW.

2. A FOUR-HOUR PERIOD OF DEBATE AND DELIBERATION PRECEEDED
CHANG'S ELECTION. HE RECEIVED A PLURALITY OF 171 VOTES. THE
RUNNER-UP, JUVENTINO VALDES OF SANTA MARIA CORREGIMIENTO,
CHIRIQUI PROVINCE, GOT 134 VOTES, WHEREAS ERNESTO CORDOBA OF
LAS CUMBRES, PANAMA PROVINCE, RECEIVED 115 AND ROBERTO PINZON
FROM ATALAYA, VERAGUAS PROVINCE, WAS GIVEN 62 VOTES. CHANG'S
WAS A LAST MINUTE CANDIDACY WHICH HAD NOT BEEN MENTIONED PUBLICLY
PRIOR TO THE CONVENING OJGTHE ASSEMBLY. VALDES AND CORDOBA HAD
ANNOUNCED THEIR RYNDIDACIES TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE SESSION AND
CORDOBA DID SOME NATIONAL CAMPAIGNING FOR THE OFFICE. ALL CANDI-
DATES HAD SERVED AS VICE PRESIDENTS OF THE ASSEMBLY DURING THE
PAST YEAR.

3. THE TEN NEW VICE PRESIDENTS, ONE FOR EACH PROVINCE AND SAN
BLAS, ARE: PEDRO SOTERO (PANAMA), CARLOS MOJICA (COCLE), DARIO
GONZALEZ PITT (CHIRIQUI), PEDRO SANCHEZ (SAN BLAS), TEODORO
WILSON (BOCAS DEL TORO), RAMON GARCIA (HERRERA), JORGE FRISTAN
(DARIEN), JUAN BREA (VERAGUAS), MARCELINO GARCIA (LOS SANTOS),
AND EUGENIO HURTADO (COLON).

4. IN ONE OF ITS FIRST OFFICIAL ACTS OF THE NEW SESSION, THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATED AT LENGTH AND APPROVED OCTOBER 15 A
RESOLUTION PROPOSED BY GREGORIO MENDOZA OF LA LAGUNA (SAN CARLOS
DISTRICT) THAT ASKS CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT GENERAL TORRIJOS FOR A
REVISION OF PERSONNEL AT THE LEVEL OF MINISTERS, DIRECTORS OF
AUTONOMOUS AND SEMIAUTONOMOUS AGENCIES, PROVINCIAL GOVENORS
AND MAYORS (ALCALDES). AS REPORTED IN GOP DAILIES CRITICA
AND MATUTINO OF OCTOBER 16, DEBATE INCLUDED ATTACKS AGAINST
PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO SHOWED "DISRESPECT FOR THE REPRESENTATIVES"
AND DISCUSSION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE RESOLUTION WOULD INFRINGE
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UPON THE CONSTITUIONAL POWERS CONFERRED UPON TORRIJOS AS CHIEF
OF GOVERNMENT TO CHOOSE HIGH OFFICIALS IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.
THE SENSE OF THE RESOLUTION WAS TO REMOVE FROM OFFICE
"THOSE WHO HAVE CONSTITUTED AN OBSTACLE TO THE
(REVOLUTIONARY) PROCESS AND WHO HAVE HELD IN CONTEMPT THE
DIGNITY OF THE HONORABLE REPRESENTATIVES." THOSE WHO SPOKE IN
SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION WERE:
TORRIJOS' COUSIN, LETICIA P. DE LOPEZ OF SANTIAGO (VERAGUAS);

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FERNANDO GUILLEN (BOCAS DEL TORO); RAFAEL SANCHEZ (COCLE;) FELICIANO GRAJALES AND AUGUSTIN REYES (PANAMA); OUTGOING NACR PRESIDENT CARLOS ESPINO (LOS SANTOS); AND HERMAN CORTES (HERRERA). GOP OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT RESOLUTION IS INITIALLY INTRODUCED, CALLED FOR ALL MINISTERS TO SUBMIT RESIGNATIONS, BUT AFTER DEBATE THIS WAS STRICKECOFROM THE PROPOSAL.

5. OTHER RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED OCTOBER 15 CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF NATIONAL BUDGET COMMISSION FROM THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO COORDINATE BUDGET MATTERS WITH THE EXECUTIVE, AND FOR THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO REPORT TO THE NACR ON THE STATUS OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK AND THE RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

6. COMMENT: THE NACR MEMBERS ARE CONTINUING THEIR EFFORTS TO GAIN INCREASED LEVERAGE ON THE GOP EXECUTIVE BRANCH. SOME OF THEIR CRITICISM OF MINISTES HAD SURFACED DURING THE YEAR AND WE ANTICIPATE THAT SOME MINISTERS AND HDLDS OF AUTONOMOUS AGENCIES WILL BE HEAVILY CRITICIZED DURING THE COMING MONTH.
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